



## **Statement on Regional Infrastructure Protection Coalitions**

At its meeting on March 22, 2005, the Financial Services Sector Coordinating Council for Critical Infrastructure Protection and Homeland Security approved this ***Statement on Regional Infrastructure Protection Coalitions*** for distribution to members of the financial services sector in the United States.

Assuring the resiliency of the financial services sector of the United States is a critical objective of national homeland security efforts. Ensuring that the financial assets of the citizens of the United States and their ability to conduct financial transactions are secure helps to preserve public trust and confidence in the national economy and the national financial system. Financial services firms can do and are doing much to provide this assurance through upgraded physical and cyber security procedures, strengthened backup capabilities and other steps to improve their resilience. In addition to the steps taken by individual firms, industry associations are also providing immense support for their members through activities focused on education, sharing of “best practices,” coordination of testing initiatives and other matters. Most of these efforts focus on the *national* financial services sector; many are taking on an increasingly international flavor, recognizing the global nature of the financial services industry.

Protecting the security of the financial services sector also has an important *local* dimension – threats to the physical security of the financial services infrastructure occur in specific locations, and responding to these threats often requires the involvement of state and local governmental officials, local law enforcement, and local “first responder” organizations. (The experience of the August 2004 “Orange” alert directed at the financial services sector in specific cities underscores the importance of this local focus on infrastructure protection activities.) Working to prepare the financial services sector to respond effectively to local incidents affecting the sector’s resilience is an important part of the sector’s response to the infrastructure protection challenge.

FSSCC member organization ChicagoFIRST provides an excellent example of how the sector can organize itself to respond to local incidents and issues. ChicagoFIRST was formed for the express purpose of building a close operational relationship between private institutions and public agencies in a specific geographic area in order to better protect the critical infrastructure of the financial services sector in that locality. The organization works to facilitate cooperation among all the key players in that area and thus provide better response in the event of an emergency. A recent fire affecting a financial services firm in Chicago provided a clear demonstration of the efficacy of that partnership, as the cooperative relationships built through ChicagoFIRST resulted in an effective and timely response to the emergency and a rapid recovery by the institution involved. (Further information about ChicagoFIRST is available at [www.ChicagoFIRST.org](http://www.ChicagoFIRST.org).)

Based on the success of the ChicagoFIRST model, the U.S. Department of the Treasury in December 2004 published ***Improving Business Continuity in the Financial Services Sector:***

***A Model for Starting Regional Coalitions*** (available on the FSSCC website at <http://www.fsscc.org/reports/ChicagoFIRSTHandbook.pdf>), co-authored by FSSCC member organization BITS/The Financial Services Roundtable and ChicagoFIRST. This publication provides an excellent guide to those seeking to establish similar regional coalitions to address infrastructure protection issues in their own areas.

The implementation of this type of regional infrastructure protection coalitions to provide locally focused support for financial firms' resilience will substantially advance the sector's infrastructure protection efforts. The FSSCC is aware that several additional coalitions have been formed in other areas of the country, such as the New England Disaster Recovery Information X-Change ([www.NEDRIX.com](http://www.NEDRIX.com)) and the Minnesota Information Sharing and Analysis Center (<http://webpages.charter.net/cterzich/MN-ISAC/>). Continued progress in forming these regionally-based initiatives will further raise the resilience of financial services throughout the nation.

The FSSCC, as the private sector organization representing the United States financial services sector in its infrastructure protection and homeland security efforts, endorses and encourages the formation of additional regional infrastructure protection coalitions to provide locally-based infrastructure protection capabilities, along the model set by ChicagoFIRST or using another approach. The FSSCC views further progress in forming these coalitions to be a critical objective for the sector's infrastructure protection efforts in 2005. The FSSCC feels that this special form of public-private partnership can aid materially in the ability of a regional area to absorb and recover from disasters, both natural and man-made. FSSCC member organizations will work with their members in regional areas interested in forming this type of coalition to facilitate the process as much as possible.